

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH [Undergraduate Program]

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ENGLISH 4238: Twentieth Century Fiction to 1940

Catalogue Course Description:

The study of representative English language novelists and short story writers to 1940. Emphasis will be given to certain topics such as modernism and innovations in literary style and choice of theme.

Class Program Spring [Jan-May 2008: Thursday 1-3:50 pm / PED 106]

General theme: Between the Great Wars—A Certain Preference for *Noir*

In the time period comprised between World War I and II, artists and writers throughout Europe and the Americas developed what Thomas Mann called “*a sympathy for the abyss.*” Writers rejected traditional narrative modes and invented new strategies to better describe a world menaced by totalitarian states, great wars, and the diminishment of mankind. In this modern world, man is mired—you take your choice—in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in a loss of faith, in the hopelessness of life viewed by many as without value. The human lot is deemed as inescapably problematic. Yet dark as the world seemed, this was an extremely fertile time of aesthetic experimentation generating literary and film brilliance. Film and pop art melted into literary genius and literary genius melted again into these. A gritty realism pictured in shadows is staged. Murder, rape, political and social corruption, treachery, and deceit make the story. We witness the spawning of *noir* in novels, in the cinema, and in pop art.

Our writers: James Joyce, Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Raymond Chandler among others. Our films: *Scarface* (1932), *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *The Big Sleep* (1946), *The Day of the Locust* (1975), *The Grifters* (1990), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *The Good German* (2007) among others.

Required texts:

A. Ordered at UPR Bookstore

Dubliners, J. Joyce
The Metamorphosis, F. Kafka
The Great Gatsby, F. S. Fitzgerald
Sanctuary, W. Faulkner
The Maltese Falcon, D. Hammett
To Have and Have Not, E. Hemingway
The Big Sleep, R. Chandler
The Day of the Locust, N. West

B. Reserved Readings (available for you at the *Seminario de Multidisciplinas, 2nd floor LPM*)

Ernest Hemingway, “The Killers” (1927)
Irving Howe, “The Idea of the Modern” (1967)

Lionel Trilling, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature" (1961)
J. Ortega y Gasset, "On the Dehumanization of Art" (1925)
A. Hauser, "The Film Age" (1951)
Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1988)

Course Outline [subject to change; check current *Course Calendar* for details]:

Week I-II: Sympathy for the Abyss: Modernism, its origins and influences

Readings: Irving Howe, "The Idea of the Modern" (1967); Lionel Trilling, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature" (1961); J. Ortega y Gasset, "On the Dehumanization of Art" (1925); A. Hauser, "The Film Age" (1951)

Screening: *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); *Âge d'or, L'* (1930)

Week III-V: The Extreme Modernists: James Joyce & Franz Kafka

Readings: *Dubliners* (1914)

The Metamorphosis (1915)

Screening: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919)

Week VI: "You are all a lost generation": F. S. Fitzgerald

Readings: *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Screening: *Scarface* (1932)

Week VII/VIII: Extreme Modernism on American Ground: William Faulkner

Readings: *Sanctuary* (1931)

Screening: *Sanctuary* (1961)

Week IX: "...a man alone ain't got no no bloody fuckin' chance": Ernest Hemingway

Readings: *To Have and Have Not* (1937) / "The Killers" (1927)

Screening: *To Have and Have Not* (1944)

Week X-XI: The World of *Noir*: Dashell Hammett & Raymond Chandler

Readings: *The Maltese Falcon* (1931) / *The Big Sleep* (1939)

Screening: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) / *The Big Sleep* (1946)

Week XII: Hollywood, the New Babylon: Nathaniel West

Readings: *The Day of the Locust* (1939)

Screening: *The Day of the Locust* (1975)

Week XIII-XV: A Postmodern Sympathy for the Abyss: Neo-Noir

Readings: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1988)

Screening: *The Grifters* (1990), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *The Good German* (2007)

Teaching strategies*: Seminar based on lectures, class discussions, and student-generated analysis.

*Students that receive services from *Occupational Rehabilitation* should contact me at the start of the semester to plan for reasonable accommodation and any assistive equipment as recommended by the *Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI)* of the *Office of the Dean of Student Affairs*. Any student who has special needs or requires any type of assistance or accommodation should see me.

*[Los estudiantes que reciben servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse conmigo al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la *Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI)* del *Decanato de Estudiantes*. Todo aquel con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tipo de asistencia o acomodo deben de comunicarse conmigo.]

Method of Evaluation: Three grades (each one: 33.9%)

- Exam I (Take-Home) @ 100 points
- Exam II (Take-Home) @ 100 points
- 5 Assignments or Reports @ 100 points

**A differentiated evaluation system is available for students with special needs. (Evaluación diferenciada disponible para estudiantes con necesidades especiales.)*

Grading System: A, B, C, D, F.

Recommended Bibliography:

- Bradbury, Malcolm and R. Ruland, eds. From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature. New York: Penguin, 1991.
- Buell, Lawrence. "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon." American Literary History, 4. 3 (1992): 411-442.
- Browne, Nick. Refiguring Film Genres: Theory and History. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998.
- Chatman, Seymour. Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.
- Cook, David A. A History of Narrative Film. [3rd ed.] New York: Norton, 1996.
- Magney, Claude-Edmonde. The Age of the American Novel: Film Aesthetic of Fiction Between the Two Wars. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972.
- Mast, Gerald, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy, Eds. Film Theory and Criticism. New York: Oxford U P, 1992.
- Neale, Steve. Genre and Hollywood. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Nichols, Bill. Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.
- Shadoian, Jack. Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film. New York: Oxford U P, 2003.
- Schatz, Thomas. Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Hollywood System. New York: McGraw Hill, 1981.
- Sklar, Robert and C. Musser, eds. Resisting Images: Radical Perspectives on Film History. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

Electronic resources:

- <http://www.thenation.com>
- <http://www.imdb.com>
- <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/arl>.
- Norton Anthology's student Web site: <http://www.wwnorton.com/nal>
- Library of Congress digital/digitized collections:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>

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